

## BACKGROUND

1. Some Administrative Support Sections from releasing commands have "missed the mark" in the past in regard to completing overseas screening and other necessary administrative requirements involved with overseas PCS, causing unnecessary hardship on the family. Late, incomplete or incorrect paperwork puts a huge burden on you and your family while already trying to deal with the "BIG" picture (Overseas & medical screening, orders, TMO, passports, POV storage, cleaning quarters, moving schools, etc.) in making the transition overseas on a PCS move.
2. Your sponsor should contact you soon after you have been identified as an inbound accompanied member to MALS-12 to exchange contact information, and ask you to provide number/ages of dependents. Please let your sponsor or me know of any possible problem issues with orders, family, (Medical or exceptional family members, etc.) that could potentially hold up your area clearance approval, which ultimately affects you/your family being fully qualified to serve overseas. There is no reason to be detailed concerning your privacy issues, just let your sponsor know that you are either **qualified, unqualified** or in the process of **determining** whether you and your family can serve overseas, due to EFMP or other reason.
3. I have included as much useful information for you as I could compile based on what I have seen during my four years as Sponsorship Coordinator, input from inbound members and having traveled throughout all the major airports, shin routes, etc. myself (With kids & bags).

## AREA CLEARANCE

1. Your command should not request an overseas area clearance for your dependents, (See MCO checklist link below) until the overseas screening process has been **completed and approved**. Likewise, TMO appointments should not be made until the overseas screening process has been completed. Refer to **ALMAR 416/96 & MARADMIN 222/99** concerning responsibility for overseas screening and exceptional family member program (**EFMP**) information which can be viewed at:  
<http://www.usmc.mil/almars/almar2000.nsf/d50a617f5ac75ae085256856004f3afc/569f9c72487084ca85256a55005e1344?OpenDocument&Highlight=2,416%2F96>  
and  
<http://www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf/d50a617f5ac75ae085256856004f3afc/c98647d04571c36385256aab004b702e?OpenDocument&Highlight=2,222%2F99>

Refer to **MCO P1300.8\_ Chap 2** and Print Appendixes B and C (Starts on page 111), which deal specifically with overseas assignments and provides your overseas screening checklist which can be viewed/downloaded at:

<http://www.usmc.mil/directiv.nsf/0dce83e13c9c8aa685256c0c0066c2e0/1e9306bd709a95238525671c00541800?OpenDocument>

**OPNAVINST 1300.14** also provides information on EFMP and medical overseas screening information and can be viewed/downloaded at:

<http://doni.daps.dla.mil/Directives/01000%20Military%20Personnel%20Support/01-300%20Assignment%20and%20Distribution%20Services/1300.14D.pdf>

Below is a quick link to the medical/dental screening form & suitability for overseas assignment form (Click on **NAVMED 1300/1 & NAVPERS 1300/16**). **These are the forms required to be approved before area clearance is requested.**

<http://buperscd.technology.navy.mil/bpforms.htm>

These references and checklists should provide you a quick and accurate answer to many of your questions on what preparations are necessary for your overseas PCS, and will allow you to be proactive on ensuring that both you and your Admin Support Staff execute your responsibilities concerning the move both correctly and on time.

2. As referenced above, if you and your family are found suitable for overseas assignment after screening, ensure that your Administrative Support Section sends a Naval Message on DMS requesting area clearance as outlined in MCO P1000.6\_ and MCO P1300.8\_ for all of your dependents accompanying you. **The message must be addressed to MCAS IWAKUNI JA(uc) and must INFO MAG 12(uc) and MALS 12(uc)** under Global Addresses in the DMS program, otherwise it will not be received at this level and I cannot grant the recommendation for Station Manpower to release the actual approval message that will be returned on DMS to you and your command. Your request should generally be sent somewhere between **90-30** days prior to your estimated arrival overseas in order to avoid holdups for your family, or return of household goods and/or dependents if you detach prior to being granted area clearance approval. If your supporting Admin Section is rusty on requesting overseas area clearance, refer them to the link I have provided below (MCO P1000.6G ACTS MANUAL) and have them see Figure 4-18 on pages 223-225. <http://www.usmc.mil/directiv.nsf/0dce83e13c9c8aa685256c0c0066c2e0/4d5b6d8cbe34d9a785256850005e3c1b?OpenDocument>

3. As stated in ALMAR 416/96, **"All Marines are reminded once again that it is their responsibility to ensure that complete overseas screening for themselves and all family members is accomplished well in advance of orders. However, the final responsibility to ensure each Marine and family member is accurately screened lies with the sending Commanding Officer."** Ensure that your Admin Section does your screening properly by the Marine Corps Order referenced above, and be proactive in ensuring that everything is completed correctly and in a timely manner. You and your family, and both transferring and receiving units will all benefit from a smooth transition process.

## **PASSPORTS**

1. All dependent members of your family must have up to date passports in order to travel, (Active duty members just need orders & Military ID). If dependents do not currently have passports, you can use one of two options depending on how much travel out of the U.S. you and your family may be planning on during and after your tour:

**Option 1:** You can go to your local U.S. Post Office to obtain proper applications, then mail completed application with fees (Approx \$80 per) and original birth certificate, (Assuming dependents are U.S. Citizens) for standard "tourist" passports that are good for 10 years for adults/5 for children.

**Option 2:** You may request no-fee passports from your Admin Support Section since passports are required by your orders for dependents to travel to Japan. Just be aware that although these may be free, your family may only travel with these passports while on official orders, not on leave to other surrounding countries (They would have to get a normal U.S. "tourist" passport otherwise). So if leave to surrounding areas is not in your future while here, this is the way to go.

The difference between the two is the money out of your own pocket. For both options you must send in original birth certificate, photos and application and the process can take up to two months before you see the passports, so start early.

2. Both area clearance and passports should be carefully planned way ahead of the arrival of your family overseas. Airline tickets/port-call and shipment of TMO should be accomplished after area clearance approval but prior to detaching the command and taking leave en-route.

## BAH AND WEIGHT ALLOWANCE

1. Be aware of two recent changes involving accompanied members; payment of basic allowance for housing (BAH), and TMO weight allowances. First, recent changes in the JFTR terminated payment of BAH for PCS personnel who elected not to bring dependents overseas with them. So if you are on an accompanied tour and your spouse/family stays in your home back in CONUS because of job, school etc., **you will not** be paid BAH for that residence once you execute the orders, which can obviously create a huge financial burden. JFTR VOL I change 226 of 1 Oct 2005 refers as does the following Maradmin link:

<http://www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf/0872a7ac9a4c08a6852569b9000bc3f1/9d194487fd7c207a85257176004b5674?OpenDocument>

Secondly, MCAS Iwakuni has been recently designated as a weight restricted area and accompanied tour personnel are now currently allowed to ship only **75%** of their full JFTR weight allowance. Ensure that your TMO understands this as they may not yet have updated their information for Iwakuni. Conversely, we are not like Okinawa, who only rates 25% of JFTR allowance, so also don't let your TMO sell you short. Unaccompanied baggage shipment is authorized not to exceed 600 pounds for active member and 200 pounds per each family member (Weight not counted against the administrative weight restriction). If there are any questions, have your sponsor put you in touch with our TMO here in Iwakuni.

**NOTE1:** As housing waiting lists become longer and more families are sent off-base, this weight restriction may continue to decrease.

**NOTE2:** Get with your sponsor to check status of washer/dryer in base housing. As the weight restriction began, housing has been furnishing all base housing with washers/dryers as personnel move out. Previously, you brought your own.

## COMMUNICATION/INFO/WEB LINKS

1. Commercial calling from U.S. to Japan is 011-81-827-79-XXXX (**SDO IS 5612**). To communicate while traveling within Japan you can use a gray or green public phone, (Usually 100/110 Yen coins) and calling **0827-79-XXXX** outside the Iwakuni area, or just **79-XXXX** if within the local Iwakuni area. Additional phone numbers for the base and baggage info are also included on the last section of the doc that I linked under Option 1 for walk through from Hiroshima Airport to JR Station Iwakuni.

2. I am providing two websites that can answer many of your questions regarding your move to MCAS Iwakuni, that are also linked in other areas below. The first is <http://www.mccsiwakuni.com> which provides information on available jobs, services, and community information aboard the Air Station, plus links to other related subjects. The second is <http://www.iwakuni.usmc.mil> which is the official MCAS Iwakuni website and provides information on numerous subjects under "Welcome aboard" such as traveling to Japan, housing info, area and climate, pet information, DOD education and driving in Japan.

3. I also encourage you to visit your nearest Personnel Services Center at your base to receive information and assistance with your PCS move. The Personnel Services Center is designed to provide assistance to all service members who are relocating from one duty station to another. "Plan My Move" and Military Installation Directories on the Military Homefront's web site will also provide installation information (link below).

<http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/ismart/MHF-MI/search.do?programID=&branchID=USMC&installationID=2545&countryID=JA&postalCode=&distance=10&x=27&y=10>

4. Personal records which you should have in your immediate possession while en-route, (unless procedures from detaching base prescribe otherwise) include: Service Record, all dental and health records, original orders with all endorsements and modifications, area clearance approval message, shot records,

passports, school records (sealed) and original birth, marriage and immigration or naturalization certificates as applies. Please also keep all plane, train, taxi, etc. receipts during your travel for your claim at IPAC.

## TRAVEL TO IWAKUNI

1. The direct AMC "Patriot Express" flight to Iwakuni was discontinued Oct 1, 2006 and there are no major airports relatively close to MCAS Iwakuni, making all travel to and from base more frustrating when dealing with kids, luggage, language barriers, local currency, etc. There is still an AMC "Patriot Express" flight from Seattle-Yokota-Kadena, but **do not allow** your detaching travel office to send you on this flight or you will have trouble getting to Iwakuni. If your travel section is determined to send you on AMC, demand that they speak to Iwakuni TMO/Travel who will explain that cost is from point of departure, all the way to the gate of MCAS Iwakuni (Includes all local travel in country, which is very expensive). Keeping in mind that small Hiroshima Airport is the closest to the base, but still 1.5 hours away on the expressway, and has no direct flights from the U.S., I have provided information on the four most likely options to travel:

**Option 1:** Tokyo Narita Intl Airport.

[http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/guide/service/list/svc\\_05.html](http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/guide/service/list/svc_05.html)

Currently, this is the TMO preferred route of travel to MCAS Iwakuni. You can fly directly from the U.S. to Narita Intl Airport and transfer to the one daily late afternoon domestic flight to Hiroshima Airport (Flight times vary seasonally, but generally leaves around 1745 and takes about 1.5 hrs to reach Hiroshima). (**NOTE:** You must go thru customs and recheck luggage for the flight to Hiroshima and luggage size/weight may now be an issue on the smaller plane if you are overloaded with luggage.) After arriving at Hiroshima Airport you can buy bus tickets from vending machines outside baggage claim prior to exiting the terminal to get to the Japanese Rail (JR) Hiroshima Station, (50 min ride). After arrival at the Hiroshima Train Station you can purchase a ticket for a local JR train to Iwakuni JR Station in downtown Iwakuni (1 hr ride). From this station, it is a 10 minute taxi ride to base, or your sponsor can pick-up. I have included the following link to a doc that walks you through the steps, with photos from Hiroshima Airport to JR Station Iwakuni:

<http://www.iwakuni.usmc.mil/NewWebsite/Welcome%20Aboard/hirodirections/hirodirections.html>

I do not recommend Shiraichi Station (also mentioned in the link) to Iwakuni by train though the Station is only 15 minutes by bus from Hiroshima Airport, due to the fact that luggage must be hand-carried aboard the shuttle bus and there is only room to sit, (I have traveled this many times myself with limited luggage). The bus to Hiroshima Train Station however, will allow you to store all luggage in below compartments. **I highly recommend printing out the document on the above link** (About 7 pages) and carrying with you to refer to if this is the route you will be arriving. The last page has numerous contact numbers & a reminder on how to use Japanese phones. Also, I can't stress enough to get \$\$ exchanged to Yen prior to leaving the U.S. or Narita. I recommend at least \$300, but if you have several dependents, more is better (You will use it while in Japan, I assure you). The only afternoon flight from Narita comes in late to Hiroshima and all money exchanges, Info booth, etc. will probably be **CLOSED** when you arrive. As this is a private airport, they will also not allow us to have a liaison or post info at the airport.

**Do not expect to be picked up outside of the Iwakuni area unless you and your sponsor have agreed upon this.** I would also like to stress that you are **responsible to get you & your family to the main gate of MCAS Iwakuni, not the sponsor or the unit as there is no duty driver or vehicle designated expressly for picking up inbounds, nor do sponsors currently get reimbursed for picking up inbound members (About \$70 in gas & tolls to travel to Hiroshima Airport).** That having been said, I am sure sponsors will work with you and assist in every way they can to get you here.

BE ADVISED: A taxi from Hiroshima Airport to MCAS Iwakuni is at least Y30,000 (\$260), can be difficult to obtain due to language issues, and fit bags on. I recommend that if a taxi is needed due to large size of family and amount of baggage, that the bus is taken to Hiroshima Train Station from the Airport (As explained above), then look for English sign for "TAXI" where a larger taxi can be obtained for travel to the Air Station by going to the taxi office and asking for a "Jumbo TAXI". Note that the taxi will not be allowed on base, so your sponsor will have to pick you up at the front gate, and you must have ample Yen to pay driver. The cost is about 18,000 Yen (\$160)

**Option 2:** Tokyo Haneda Domestic Airport.

You can fly into Tokyo Narita directly from U.S. and transfer by bus to Tokyo Haneda Domestic Airport for numerous daily flights to Hiroshima. The bus can take up to 2 hours depending on Tokyo traffic and you must first clear customs and collect all bags to take with you. Bus tickets for the trip can be bought at the airport bus desk near the terminal exit point, and most staff members speak English and can direct you how to get to the correct waiting area for the next available bus (Note: If you have pets, you will most likely give them up at Narita Airport baggage pickup for quarantine and onward travel later to Iwakuni). From Hiroshima Airport, follow the same route as Option 1 above.

**Option 3:** Osaka Kansai Intl.

<http://www.kansai-airport.or.jp/en/index.asp>

I only would recommend this route for those with just a spouse and 2-3 bags due to the fact that you must take three separate trains with limited luggage storing. You can fly directly from U.S to Osaka Kansai Intl Airport. After clearing customs, you must collect your bags and purchase tickets at the JR ticket station just after exiting Kansai Airport (1 floor up after departing baggage claim) for both local train and Shinkansen (Shin) train rides to Shin Station Iwakuni. The cost is approximately \$110 Adult and \$55 child 6-11. Children 5 and under are free, but do not get a seat (They share with you). It is about 45 minutes on the local (Haruka/Kansai Express) train that runs from the airport to Shin Osaka Station. Once at the Shin Station, you can board the fastest Shin (Nozomi) and travel to Hiroshima Shin Station (About 2.5 hrs) where you will transfer to a fast Shin (Kodama) for the remaining 20 minute ride to Shin Iwakuni Station, which is about a 30-40 minute car/taxi ride from base. I have provided a link under "Shinkansen travel" below to the MCAS Iwakuni website that has an excellent video and will walk you thru what to do from Osaka Kansai Airport to Shin Station Iwakuni (Also see how to read train tickets under same link).

**Option 4:** Fukuoka Intl Airport.

[http://www.fuk-ab.co.jp/english/frame\\_index.html](http://www.fuk-ab.co.jp/english/frame_index.html)

I only would recommend this route for those with limited bags due to the fact that you must travel quite a way by foot, and due to limited luggage storing. You can fly directly to Fukuoka Intl Airport, and take an airport shuttle to the Domestic Terminal. When you leave the Domestic Terminal you will be outside, so turn left and follow the (train icon) signs to the Subway (About 100 yd walk & go downstairs). At the bottom of the stairs and directly in front of you, you will see machines for purchasing subway tickets. Placing 250 Yen in coins into slot & pressing 250 button will spit out a small ticket for you. Take the ticket, and move to your right a few yards where subway entrance machines are located. Insert ticket in machine to be punched, walk thru gate & grab your punched ticket again. Follow crowd downstairs to subway and board next available train. Hakata Station is the 2<sup>nd</sup> stop after the Airport Subway Station (10 min ride). If excess luggage is an issue, you can ship some to MCAS Iwakuni via Nittsu or Yamato Transport located in the arrival area of Fukuoka Airport Terminal (Note "Shinkansen travel" below concerning baggage service). Upon arriving at Hakata

Train Station, use the escalator to the upper floor, turn left and walk until you come to another escalator to the next level (Mr. Donut will be on your right side as you approach 2<sup>nd</sup> escalator). At top of escalator, look to your right for the Shinkansen ticket office and get in line to purchase tickets for "**Iwakuni Shin Station**" (Approx \$70 Adult & \$35 child 6-11). Children 5 and under are free, but do not get a seat (They share with you). Your train will not say it will stop in Iwakuni, more likely Yamaguchi or other, so ask the ticket issuer to write the # of the train for you so you get on the right one, (Example, Kodama #623). Right outside of the ticket office are LED signs indicating train#, departing time and track# (Use escalator on right most likely). Once you find the track and verify your train# and time with the LED nearest that track, board train arriving nearest your departure time and/or ask Shin support personnel if that is the # of your train (Car & seat #s should be on your ticket). NOTE that only KODAMA type Shinkansen trains stop in Iwakuni, the faster NOZOMI does not. The Shin will make a few stops before arriving at Iwakuni Shin Station (1.5 hour ride). Once you arrive at the Iwakuni Train Station, you can take a taxi (Depending on family size & luggage) or have sponsor pick you up.

### SHINKANSEN (BULLET TRAIN) TRAVEL

1. Should you arrive in either Osaka or Fukuoka Airports, neither airport has connecting flights to Hiroshima Airport, and you must take the Shinkansen (Shin) to Iwakuni from these arrival points. I have explained travel from Osaka and Fukuoka above and included great links to assist.

2. Shin tickets **cannot** be purchased in advance from the U.S., but both Yen and most major credit cards are accepted here in Japan. The Shin is expensive, difficult for 1<sup>st</sup> timers to navigate, only stops for about 1 minute at each stop, (Exception can be the KODAMA), and will not allow pets other than with a small, "hand-carried" carrier. If you have more than 1 suitcase per adult (You basically keep your luggage with you where you sit if you desire to make it out of the Shin with your luggage at your stop), you may also run into problems. Due to this limited baggage space, the baggage delivery service is recommended for all personnel traveling via the Shin from Kansai or Fukuoka airport, particularly those traveling with numerous bags. Note that in many cases, families were not allowed to board the Shin if they had too much luggage. Inbound personnel should have baggage delivered to TMO, Freight Shipping and Receiving, Bldg 1710, MCAS Iwakuni, phone number 253-6716/4379. Total linear dimensions cannot exceed 67 inches or 170 cm, and total weight cannot exceed 66 lbs or 30 kg. The cost is about 1,300 - 2,700 Yen (\$11-24) per bag depending on size (**This is currently reimbursable on your travel claim**). Note also that you must transfer Shinkansen trains at Hiroshima Shin Station if you come from Osaka or Tokyo Station to make the last leg to Iwakuni. Review the following link for more detailed information on travel, including very well made videos on how to travel to Iwakuni from Narita and Osaka Airports, and information on how to buy/read train tickets, use Japanese phones and info on baggage delivery service. There are restrooms on the Shin trains (Use Western style please until you are used to Japanese style). <http://www.iwakuni.usmc.mil/NewWebsite/Welcome%20Aboard/TravelingToJapan.html>

### HOUSING & PETS

1. Ms. Shimada from Family Housing has recently stated that there will be a whole house renovation project in the Monzen Housing Area throughout the next 5 yrs. Townhouses will basically be unavailable during this time because they will be reserved for families currently living in the Monzen Housing Area that will need to be moved for renovation. This means that families bringing dogs will have to reside off-base. The estimated waiting time for enlisted quarters is approximately 24 to 36 months.

2. Dogs are **not allowed**, (cats OK) in Mid-rise apartments, but both dogs and cats are allowed in townhouses. With this in mind, housing states that the first available quarters will be offered regardless of location or type/style of quarters that you desire (townhouse or midrise apartment) upon reaching the number one position on the waiting list. All are eligible for two offers of family quarters, however, should the member decline the first offer of quarters, **Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA) will be terminated** effective the day before the declined quarters would have become available. Should the member decline the second offer of family quarters, the housing application will be cancelled that date (You can be put on bottom of housing list or move out in town). Please be under advisement that due to the above rule, bringing pets could create a financial burden due to loss of TLA. Also note that off-base quarters that allow pets (especially cats) can also be difficult to find, and housing is not exactly similar to U.S. standards... As a last note, whether you travel by aircraft or by Shinkansen (Bullet train) or a combination of both to Iwakuni, you must meet strict guidelines on pet carrier dimensions, or the pet will not be allowed to travel. It is also your responsibility to ensure that a reservation (Date & time arrive) is made for your pet at the kennel aboard MCAS Iwakuni when you arrive, as pets are not allowed in TLF and as the kennel is not a 24 hour operation.

3. If you are even thinking about bringing pets, I highly recommend reviewing all available pet information (Below website links, welcome aboard package, etc.) **prior** to making a decision on whether or not to bring a pet, due to travel problems, housing restrictions and high associated costs. Also, pets are being highly discouraged to bring to Iwakuni and note that during the summer seasons most pets will not be air transported due to the heat. I can forward another information sheet to you upon request concerning "Pet Movement Options" that includes kennel carrier restrictions and basic info on cost of pet shipment. Refer to the below link and click "New Pet Policy" and "Pet Info" for more information on pets.

<http://www.iwakuni.usmc.mil/NewWebsite/Welcome%20Aboard/welcome.html>

also refer to the following link and narrow down to pets in Japan:

<http://www.usarj.army.mil/organization/vet/>

#### **UPON ARRIVAL**

1. After arrival, you the member must report to IPAC New Joins at Bldg 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> deck the next normal work morning following arrival with all orders, endorsements, area clearance approval, SRB and receipts/tickets. If you arrive in the evening or the weekend, you can get orders endorsed at the MAG duty on the bottom deck of Bldg 1 and see IPAC on first working day.

2. On the first Monday and Friday after arrival, all the members of your family ages 13 and above will need to attend the Station Indoc (Ballroom & Theatre). Your sponsor should provide you with a complete itinerary for this 2 day evolution, which includes a trip out in town to eat and shop. For those with children under 13, you will leave your children with the CDC or Youth Center (Age dependant) and will get a voucher from the Indoc personnel to cover the free service for those two days. Also let your sponsor know that your initial housing appointment cannot conflict with this Indoc, or housing will cancel and reschedule for after your Indoc.

3. Also note that unlike most other bases, Iwakuni has a free shuttle bus for service members and their dependents that runs all day and hits all bus stops 2-4 times an hour depending on peak period use.

## CONCLUSION

1. Keeping all the above in mind, travel lighter than you are normally accustomed to (Your orders may say 2 bags per, but Shins, airlines, taxis don't really care), have a valid credit card, and ample Japanese Yen to cover travel & expenses for the entire family (It doesn't hurt to have a sense of humor also). I also highly recommend shipping some of your uniform items to your sponsor (Cammies, boots, alphas, short/long sleeve shirts, etc.) and ask them to have sent to the cleaners, picked up, and put in your TLF room the day you arrive. They can then hand you a copy of the bill for payment from you, and you are happy because they are ready to go and you didn't lug them all the way from the U.S. Ditto on basic food items in your room if you desire, (You will be too tired to get breakfast/lunch the day after arrival, I can almost assure you). Work with your sponsor on these issues.

2. Keep in close contact with your sponsor before and during your move and ensure that your sponsor knows your itinerary and that you have contact phone #s and know how to use them in from CONUS and within Japan. Your sponsor should have a TLF room reserved for your arrival and have a PO Box established for you as well, (Ask them). Your sponsors remain ready to assist you with information and assistance to make your overseas transition as smooth as possible.

MSgt P.M. Ford  
MALS-12 Sponsorship Coordinator